What is claimed is:

1. A method of efficiently serving content in a distributed computing environment, comprising steps of:

receiving usage metrics for a particular stored object; and

evaluating the received usage metrics to determine whether the particular stored object is stored in an appropriate location, and moving the particular stored location if not.

2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are received from a server.

3. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the received usage metrics are gathered by a system responsible for storing the particular stored object.

4. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are encoded in a Hypertext Transfer Protocol message header.

5. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are encoded using syntax of a markup language.

6. The method according to Claim 5, wherein the markup language is HTML ("Hypertext Markup Language").

7. The method according to Claim 6, wherein the syntax comprises a "META" tag using an

2   "HTTP-EQUIV" attribute syntax.

1   8.   The method according to Claim 6, wherein the syntax comprises a "META" tag using a

2   "NAME" attribute syntax.

1   9.   The method according to Claim 6, wherein the syntax comprises a specially-denoted

2   comment.

1   10.   The method according to Claim 5, wherein the markup language is XML ("Extensible

2   Markup Language").

1   11.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are received in response to a

2   query for remotely-stored usage metric information.

1   12.   The method according to Claim 11, wherein the query uses a WebDAV request.

1   13.   The method according to Claim 12, wherein a response to the WebDAV request specifies

2   usage metrics gathered by at least one server.

1   14.   The method according to Claim 4, wherein the usage metrics are encoded using one or

2   more cookies.

1   15.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are encoded in a Wireless

2   Session Protocol message header.

1   16.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expected popularity

2   values.

1   17.   The method according to Claim 16, wherein the expected popularity values are provided

2   by a user.

1   18.   The method according to Claim 16, wherein the expected popularity values are predicted

2   by a content management system.

1   19.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are received as meta-data on

2   a file access message.

1   20.   The method according to Claim 1, further comprising steps of:

2   gathering usage metrics by a server; and

3   sending the gathered usage metrics from the server; and

4   wherein the received usage metrics are those sent from the server.

1   21.   The method according to Claim 20, wherein the sending step operates in response to a

2   triggering event.

1   22.   The method according to Claim 21, wherein the triggering event comprises expiration of a

2   timer.

1   23.   The method according to Claim 21, wherein the triggering event comprises exceeding a

2   threshold.

1   24.   The method according to Claim 21, wherein the triggering event comprises receiving a

2   query for the usage metrics.

1   25.   The method according to Claim 20, wherein the gathering step further comprises

2   gathering the usage metrics by analyzing an access log.

1   26.   The method according to Claim 20, wherein the gathering step further comprises

2   gathering the usage metrics by tracking access requests at the server.

1   27.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as a

2   mnemonic.

1   28.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as a scaled

2   number.

1   29.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as a

2   percentage of access requests.

1   30.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as an actual

2   number of access requests.

1   31.   The method according to Claim 1, wherein the usage metrics are expressed as a ranking.

1   32.   A system for efficiently serving content in a distributed computing environment using a

2   network-attached storage ("NAS") system, comprising steps of:

3   means for receiving, by a component of the NAS system, usage metrics for a particular

4   stored object; and

5   means for evaluating the received usage metrics to determine whether the particular stored

6   object is stored in an appropriate location, and for moving the particular stored location if not.

1   33.   The system according to Claim 32, further comprising:

2   means for gathering usage metrics by a server; and

3   means for sending the gathered usage metrics from the server; and

4   wherein the received usage metrics are those sent from the server.

1   34.   A computer program product for efficiently serving content using a network-attached

2   storage ("NAS") system, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-

3   usable media and comprising:

4   computer readable program code means for receiving, by a component of the NAS

5   system, usage metrics for a particular stored object; and

6   computer readable program code means for evaluating the received usage metrics to

7   determine whether the particular stored object is stored in an appropriate location, and for moving

8   the particular stored location if not.

1   35.   The computer program product according to Claim 34, further comprising:

2   computer readable program code means for gathering usage metrics by a server; and

3   computer readable program code means for sending the gathered usage metrics from the

4   server; and

5   wherein the received usage metrics are those sent from the server.